



University of
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Office of
Child Development
School of Education

PHSA

Farm to Early Childhood Education Capacity
Grant

Summary Report

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Farm to ECE Evaluation Report: Results from the Go NAPSACC Self-Assessment

About the Program and Best Practices Self-Assessment

Go NAPSACC began as the Nutrition and Physical Activity for Child Care Program (NAPSACC) in 2002 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (NAPSACC, 2018). It has since been adopted by over 30 states and has been recognized by Center for Excellence in Training and Research Translation as an “effective, evidence-based program.” Go NAPSACC is the second generation of NAPSACC providing early care and education professionals with online tools. Pennsylvania has supported Early Learning Programs through the NAPSACC program since 2012 through its Mini Grant Project (*Keystone Kids Go!*, n.d.).

Farm to ECE is one of Go NAPSACC’s modules which focuses on “access to” and “appreciation of” locally grown fruits and vegetables (NAPSACC, 2018). The self-assessment contains 19 questions that address the following best practices: Local Foods provided, Gardening, Education & Professional Development, and Policy.

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development was asked to summarize the results of the pre and post self-assessments.

Participating Programs

A total of 32 programs completed both pre-test in the fall and post-test in the winter, 28 of those programs also completed an End of Project Reflection. These Pennsylvania programs served between three and 1200 students and covered 20 different counties. Participating programs included center-based, Head Start and/or Early Head Start, family childcare home, and school-based pre-kindergarten programs.

Table 1 lists the 32 participating programs based on the type of program. The eight Head Start and/or Early Head Start programs were the largest, serving 511.1 students on average (range: 172 – 1222). Center-based programs were the most common type (n=17) also tended to be larger programs, serving 84.7 students on average (range: 9 - 500). The six Family childcare homes were smaller, serving 7.8 students on average (range: 3 – 10). Finally, there was one School-Based Pre-Kindergarten Program which served about 188 students.

Table 1. Participating Centers by Program Type (N=32)

Program name	County	# Served
Center-based Programs (n=17)		
Angels' Place, Inc.	Allegheny	32
Anointed Flavors Learning Center	Philadelphia	13
Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center	Blair	67
Children's Playhouse 2	Philadelphia	9
Community Action Partnership Early Learning Center	Lancaster	50
Greener Little Seeds, LLC	Philadelphia	6
Methodist Services Educare Learning Center	Philadelphia	137
Play Learning Center LLC	Franklin	12
Riverview Children's Center	Allegheny	100
Small Town Hope Inc.	Cambria	40
Start Smart Learning Center	Blair	45
Stepping Stones Nursery School and Daycare	Montgomery	31
The Caring Center	Philadelphia	70
The Learning Station	Centre	65
Today's Child Learning Centers	Delaware	500
Touching the Future LLC	Berks	220
Warriors Mark United Methodist Church Daycare	Huntingdon	43
Head Start / Early Head Start (n=8)		
ALSM Bedford Fulton Head Start Early Head Start	Bedford	282
Capital Area Head Start	Dauphin	351
First Start Partnerships for Children and Families	Franklin	712
Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.	Luzerne	1222
Mercer County Head Start	Mercer	500
Montgomery County Intermediate Unit-23	Montgomery	500
Norris Square Community Alliance	Philadelphia	172
Seton Hill Child Services, Inc.	Westmoreland	350
Family childcare home (n=6)		
Annie's Bubble Care Family home childcare	Erie	6
Bridget Heintz Family Child Care Home	Dauphin	3
Browns Family Childcare, LLC	Venango	12
Cindy Shafer's Daycare	Somerset	6
Glenda Kester family day care	Huntingdon	10
The Art of Play Early Learning Center	Cumberland	10
School-based Pre-Kindergarten (n=1)		
Penn Mont Academy	Blair	188

Go NAPSACC Farm to ECE Self-Assessment Overview

The self-assessment has 19 items, scored on a scale of 1 – 4, addressing recommended practices in the Farm to ECE program. A score of 1 represented the least amount or least frequency of the target practice, while 4 represented the highest amount. Some items asked respondents to choose all answers that applied from a list of options. For these items, higher scores indicated a larger number of answers selected. Programs achieved a Best Practice (BP) score on each item if they selected the maximum value response of 4 (See Appendix A for the Self-Assessment Instrument). The assessment is divided into the following four categories which are intended to “guide childcare providers towards healthy changes” (NAPSACC, 2018):

Local Foods

Participating programs are asked about what type of local foods are offered as snacks, when they are offered, and what type of communication is used about the local food they are using.

Gardening

Participating programs are asked about the number and variety of fruits/vegetables grown in their garden as well as the structured time children have in the garden.

Education and Professional Development

Participating Programs are asked about curriculum and materials that are related to gardening and cooking foods from the garden. In addition, they are asked to identify who participates in professional development about Farm to ECE and the types of materials that are utilized. Education also includes the education of parents and input from parents on meal preparation.

Policy

In addressing policy, the NAPSACC assessment asks programs to identify from a list which topics are included in their written Farm to ECE policy.

Error! Reference source not found. summarizes category pre and post test data for the 32 programs. There was an increase in all scores between pre and posttest. The largest gain and highest overall BP score was in the Local Food category. Policy was the only category that remained below a 2.0 at posttest. Gardening and Education scores were in the middle of the range, yet both gained at least half a point between pre and posttest.

Definition of Local Food

For Go NAPSACC, local foods can come from your program’s garden; directly from a farmer; or from a distributor, “food hub”, grocery store, farm stand, or farmers’ market. Local foods may be grown in your state or, if you are close to a border, a neighboring state (NAPSACC, 2018).

Table 2 Go NAPSACC Farm to ECE Self-Assessment Summary by Category

Category	# Questions	Pre-Test Average (Range 1 – 4)	Post-Test Average (Range 1 – 4)	Difference
Local Foods	4	2.4	3.0	0.6
Gardening	5	2.0	2.5	0.5
Education	9	2.2	2.8	0.5

Policy	1	1.3	1.7	0.4
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Best Practices Achieved on Go NAPSACC Farm to ECE Self-Assessment

Addressing Missing Data

It is important to note that all programs did not answer the same number of questions on the self-assessment. Ten of the 32 programs did not have complete data on all 19 BPs. Patterns of missingness are most likely explained by assessment instructions which directed respondents to skip items that did not apply to their programs. Thus, the maximum number of possible BPs varied across programs. Six programs were missing data for one BP, one program was missing data for 2 BPs, and three programs were missing data for 5 BPs. All programs were missing the same data at pre- and posttest.

Family childcare home programs were given a self-assessment that did not include the question about preschool children meeting a farmer. Three of 17 Center-based programs skipped five questions which included all four of the local food category questions as well as a question on family meal input. One Head Start/Early Head Start program skipped two questions which involve preschool students meeting a farmer and preschool students cooking with fruits/vegetables. Table 3 shows which items were missing or considered not applicable by the programs.

Table 3 Best Practices Items Skipped/Missing

Best Practice	# Missing (N/A)
Local Foods Offered for Snacks/Meals	3
Yearlong Local Food Offering	3
Growing Season Local Food Offering	3
Communication about Local Foods (Snacks/Meals)	3
Cook/Taste Fresh Vegetables/Fruits Activities	1
Students Meet a Farmer	7
Family Meal Input	3

Best Practices Achieved by Program Type

Table 4 shows the average number of BPs achieved by program type. All program types increased their BPs, the highest growth being in Family childcare home and School-based Pre-Kindergarten programs. Childcare homes and the school-based PreK finished the program with the most BPs. The Head Start/Early Head Start Program showed the least growth and also the fewest BPs.

Table 4 Best Practices Achieved by Program Type

Program Types	BP Average (# of 4's) Pre-Test	BP Average (# of 4's) Post-Test	BP Difference
Center-based	5.2	6.8	1.6
Family childcare home	5.3	9.8	4.5
Head Start / Early Head Start	1.1	1.8	0.6
School-based Pre-Kindergarten	5.0	8.0	3.0

All Programs	5.2	6.2	2.0
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Individual Program Progress in Best Practices

Table 5 details BP growth for all programs. Overall, 57% of participating programs (18) gained at least one BP. The following six gained five or more Best Practices: Cindy Shafer's Daycare, The Art of Play Early Learning Center, Start Smart Learning Center, The Caring Center, Today's Child Learning Centers, and Bridget Heintz Family Child Care Home. An additional 12 programs gained one to four BPs.

Eight programs showed no change (0) in BPs. These programs can be divided into steady low and steady high programs. Participants in the steady high category began and ended with at least 11 BPs. Participants in the steady low category maintained between one and four BPs. Six programs declined in BPs, though the magnitude of declines were small (1 or 2 BPs).

Table 6 also includes pre and post assessment item-averages for the programs. Nearly all (94%) programs showed an increase in their average score on the assessment items. Five programs made large gains of one point or more on average: Cindy Shafer's Daycare, Start Smart Learning Center, The Art of Play Early Learning Center, Bridget Heintz Family Child Care Home and Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center. Two programs decreased in average-item score: Anointed Flavors Learning Center and Methodist Services Educare Learning Center. Again, decreases were small in magnitude.

Interestingly, declines in number of BPs achieved and average item score did not always correspond. Some programs which had fewer BPs at posttest than pretest simultaneously displayed growth in their overall item average (First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, Touching the Future LLC, Seton Hill Child Services, Inc.). These results indicate that program could be making progress on Farm to ECE goals overall, while still slipping a bit on a single activity resulting in a small decline in BP score for a single item.

Table 5 Pre- and Posttest Best Practices and Average Item Score by Program

Programs		# Best Practices			Average Item Score		
Name	TYPE	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff
Cindy Shafer's Daycare	FCCH	0	12	12	1.4	3.7	2.3
The Art of Play Early Learning Center	FCCH	1	10	9	1.7	3.4	1.7
Start Smart Learning Center	CB	0	8	8	1.2	3.4	2.2
The Caring Center	CB	10	17	7	3.4	3.9	0.5
Bridget Heintz Family Child Care Home	FCCH	3	8	5	2.1	3.1	1.0
Today's Child Learning Centers	CB	0	5	5	1.6	2.4	0.8
Community Action Partnership Early Learning Center	CB	1	5	4	1.7	2.5	0.8
Penn Mont Academy	SB	5	8	3	2.6	2.9	0.3
Glenda Kester family day care	FCCH	3	6	3	1.9	2.8	0.9
Stepping Stones Nursery School and Daycare	CB	2	5	3	2.2	3.1	0.9
ALSM Bedford Fulton Head Start Early Head Start	HS/EHS	1	3	2	2.2	2.4	0.2
Capital Area Head Start	HS/EHS	1	3	2	1.6	2.0	0.4
Warriors Mark United Methodist Church Daycare	CB	0	2	2	1.9	2.5	0.6
Mercer County Head Start	HS/EHS	0	2	2	1.8	2.1	0.3
Angels' Place, Inc.	CB	9	10	1	3.1	3.3	0.2
Riverview Children's Center	CB	2	3	1	1.5	2.1	0.6
Small Town Hope Inc.	CB	0	1	1	1.4	2.3	0.9
Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.	HS/EHS	0	1	1	1.4	2.2	0.8
Greener Little Seeds, LLC	CB	17	17	0	3.7	3.8	0.1
Children's Playhouse 2	CB	12	12	0	3.5	3.6	0.1
Annie's Bubble Care Family Home Childcare	FCCH	11	11	0	3.5	3.2	-0.3
Anointed Flavors Learning Center	CB	4	4	0	2.2	2.3	0.1
Norris Square Community Alliance	HS/EHS	3	3	0	2.2	2.3	0.1
Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center	CB	2	2	0	1.1	2.2	1.1
Montgomery County Intermediate	HS/EHS	1	1	0	1.6	1.9	0.3
Play Learning Center LLC	CB	0	0	0	1.1	1.2	0.1
The Learning Station	CB	18	17	-1	3.9	3.9	0.0
First Start Partnerships for Children and Families	HS/EHS	2	1	-1	1.6	1.8	0.2
Touching the Future LLC	CB	1	0	-1	1.4	1.9	0.5
Seton Hill Child Services, Inc.	HS/EHS	1	0	-1	1.4	1.7	0.3
Browns Family Childcare, LLC	FCCH	14	12	-2	3.7	3.7	0.0
Methodist Services Educare Learning Center	CB	10	8	-2	3.4	3.2	-0.2

Summary of Assessment Scores by Item

Table 6 summarizes the assessment items by both item average and program achievement in each BP. The table is sorted by the highest BP frequency at the post assessment. All items increased on average. All but two items increased in their number of BPs.

Table 6 Summary of Best Practices Items by Average and Program Achievement

Best Practice	Item Averages			Program Achievement		
	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff
Materials used	3.0	3.6	0.6	17	22	5
Garden Activities	2.4	3.1	0.7	10	18	8
Yearlong Local Food Offering	2.6	3.3	0.7	12	16	4
Informal Food Talk	2.7	3.2	0.5	9	12	3
Family Connections	2.2	2.8	0.7	6	11	5
Staff PD Participation	1.8	2.4	0.6	7	11	4
Structured gardening time	2.0	2.6	0.6	8	11	3
Local Foods offered snacks/meals	2.6	3.3	0.8	9	11	2
Growing Season Local Food Offering	2.5	3.0	0.5	11	11	0
Garden description	2.2	2.7	0.5	5	10	5
Cooking/tasting fresh vegetables/fruits	2.2	2.9	0.7	5	10	5
Variety of Vegetables/Fruits	1.9	2.4	0.5	5	9	4
Planned Food Education	2.3	2.7	0.4	6	9	3
PD Topics	1.7	2.3	0.6	4	8	4
Family Meal Input	2.1	2.4	0.3	3	7	4
How many vegetables/fruits grown?	2.0	2.2	0.2	6	7	1
Topics on Policy	1.3	1.7	0.4	3	5	2
Communication about Local Foods (Snacks/Meals)	2.0	2.5	0.5	5	5	0
Meet a farmer (pre school)	2.0	2.4	0.4	3	4	1

Materials Used, Garden Activities, and Yearlong Local Food Offering were a BP of at least 50% of the 32 programs. Growing Season Local Food Offering and Communication About Local Foods both showed no increase in the number of participants in Best Practice.

Greatest change was seen in the number of garden activities that are utilized by program participants. In the posttest 18 of the 32 programs (56%) have Garden Activities as a best practice. Other common BP areas were variety of learning materials used (69% of programs) and offering local food all year long (50%).

At pre-test, topics on Policy, Meet a Farmer, and Family Meal Input had the least amount of BPs (three). However, at posttest, four programs gained a BP in Family Meal Input. The other two topics remained at the bottom of the BP items.

Farm to ECE End of Project Reflection

Of the 32 participating programs, 28 completed the reflection survey. The following are summaries of selected reflection topics.

Reflections - Program Goals

Participants were first asked to identify goals for the grant based on a list of eleven activities and then asked which of those activities they were able to implement. They were also given the option to add a goal; only one program added a goal.

Activities having to do with building a garden, educational activities to support the garden, and exploration of locally grown foods were chosen by most programs. All programs reporting these activities as their goal also reported these as activities they implemented.

Activity	Intent	Implemented	% Implemented
Educational activities that support exploration of local food, agriculture, gardens, and nutrition	21	21	100%
Locally grown food for taste tests and food preparation with children	20	20	100%
Purchase/development of gardens	20	20	100%

About half of programs chose goals that centered around garden centered resources for families and increasing access to local foods to families and the community. These activities were also 100% implemented.

Activity	Intent	Implemented	% Implemented
Resources or education for families and the community (i.e. sending bags of local food home with families, related information, activities/workshops, seeds, materials, etc.)	13	13	100%
Increasing access to local foods for program, staff, and/or families	11	11	100%

Alternate garden locations (windowsills, indoors) and purchasing of local foods were also goals chosen by over half of the programs, however, they were not 100% implemented by all who chose it as a goal.

Activity	Intent	Implemented	% Implemented
Edible plants in gardens, on windowsills, or with indoor grow lights (such as potting soil, containers, seeds, watering cans, etc.)	18	15	83%
Purchasing of local foods for meals and/or snacks	14	11	79%

Activities that were less likely to be chosen by programs required more time to establish relationships with the community and stakeholders. These activities were also the least likely to be implemented.

Activity	Intent	Implemented	% Implemented
Establishing a Farmer's Market at your program	4	2	50%
The development of partnerships with WIC, Farmers markets or other community stakeholder to increase access to affordable local produce to the site	7	3	43%
Developing capacity to serve as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) distribution site	1	0	0%
Establishing your program as a WIC check distribution site	0	0	0%

Reflections - Barriers and Challenges

Participants were asked about the barriers/challenges they encountered when working toward their Farm to ECE goals. Below are a sample of relevant themes that emerged from these responses:

Funding – those who mentioned funding talked about needing additional funding, getting funding too late, or not getting funding at all. In addition, some mentioned increase in prices for their gardens (whether in the form of actual produce or staffing for their gardens).

- *"Funding for staff"*
- *"Fresh fruits and vegetables are more expensive and have created more labor in the kitchen"*
- *"I have not heard back regarding whether or not the money was sent and haven't been able to track it down internally"*
- *"There were price changes that affected my plans and materials I purchased"*
- *"late notice and availability of funding came at the end of growing season"*

COVID/Staffing – COVID proved to be a barrier to having people in person to assist in the garden and/or having families join in the garden time with students. Most mentioned staffing and COVID together.

- *“Covid-19 was also a barrier in us being able to build and establish our garden and programing during this time frame”*
- *“Covid makes it a challenge to run our direct encounters program and directly introduce ag in the real working world”*
- *“We wanted to incorporate seniors to help our children learn gardening for an intergenerational approach. The challenge was covid.”*
- *“COVID. We still have pieces of our gardens that require manpower/volunteers to fully get up and running for spring. We are incredibly short staffed and all running on empty, but did the best we could. Additionally, we had lined up volunteers from United Way Day of Caring to help work in the garden and assemble new pieces, but our project was cancelled two days prior to the event due to lack of volunteers.”*
- *“Both staffing and COVID-19 were challenges we encountered. “*

Staffing and Issues with Staff (in general)

- *“The work done to achieve the goals of the project was challenging with only one Nutritional Coordinator (NC). The North Side center was required to operate without a NC and relied on the support of directors, volunteers, and staff to support food preparation efforts.”*
- *“Being short staffed”*
- *“Getting staff excited to try new ideas, getting the cooks excited to try preparing new vegetables.”*

Gardening - weather, critters, time of year and funding were all sources of barriers/challenges.

- *“Weather and delayed shipping- our garden project will not reach full implementation until spring”*
- *“For our garden, it would be the seasonal changes. Some of our cucumbers got too much water and didn't make it harvest. We also had a few apples in our trees but the squirrels decided to enjoy them.”*
- *“we found it challenging to keep groundhogs from surrounding areas out of the garden, which made it difficult to harvest the crops we'd planted and grown. We tried a number of methods to keep them out, but unfortunately, they managed to continually find ways into the garden to eat our crops. We hoped to build a farm stand to share harvested produce with the community, but the groundhogs' tenacity left us without excess to make that happen at this time.”*
- *“Getting resources and finding the right fit type of garden for our facility”*

Time was written as challenge/barrier by four programs. However, it was only expressed as “time”.

Finding partners such as farmer's markets and farms.

Reflections - Greatest Success

Programs were very proud of the work that they were able to accomplish with the grant that they were given. They expressed their success in terms of impact on children, families, partnerships, the garden, and the value of fresh produce. Below is a summary of programs' greatest successes in their own words:

Impact on Children

- *"Children were able to learn how not all things that grow from the ground are flowers like some thought. Children were able to taste foods that grew in the garden. They also learned how some plants and herbs were used by our Taino and African ancestors for healing and making you feel better, including a leaf that was used to brush their teeth."*
- *"Teaching the children about different fruits and vegetables, and farm to table side of things. The kids truly enjoyed growing foods and found great accomplishment in being able to taste their products when they were done."*
- *"We were able to actually grow our produce. All the children participated in our gardening project! They helped plant the seeds, water them daily and watch them grow. The greatest success is to see their smiles and curious faces!"*
- *"The children going into the garden daily and planting and caring and then harvesting vegetables and fruit."*

Family Relationships

- *"The family partnership and involvement and the success I had with getting my preschoolers and school agers try a variety of fruits and vegetables."*
- *"The greatest success was getting fresh produce into the hands of families with young children."*

Growth in Partnerships

- *"Our greatest success was fostering our partnership with The Edible Classroom, a local nonprofit dedicated to gardening education in the community. They helped us revitalize our garden space, shared lessons and food tastings with the children in our classrooms, and provided ideas on ways to continue maintaining our garden space."*
- *"Our strengthened collaboration with WIC and our future engagement planned with our local farmers market"*
- *"We were also able to support a local grower who mentioned how thankful the family farm was for the ability to receive these funds through this program."*

Garden

- *"So far it has been creating the space for the garden and rallying staff and students to embrace the project"*
- *"We continue to build on our existing space, getting better and more thoughtful each year. "*

- *“Successfully grew and sampled several vegetables in our own garden that the children planted and tended.”*
- *“We grew 46 pumpkins, 3 watermelons 5 cantaloupe and 2 eggplants successfully this yr”*
- *“Ability to grow fresh fruits, veggies, and herbs all year around without worrying about growing seasons and pests.”*

Value of having fresh produce

- *“Getting the children and parents excited about fresh produce.”*
- *“The greatest success was getting fresh produce into the hands of families with young children.”*
- *“We got free, local produce into homes that would not normally have any fresh produce. And got children to try fruits and vegetables they wouldn't normally have tried.”*
- *“Increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables on our menu and going FRESH. More scratch meals. Less Processed foods.”*
- *“Our greatest successes are the incorporation of many local food products into the mouths of our children!!!”*

Conclusion

Overall, the Farm to ECE program had a positive impact. Most participating programs made gains in Best Practices and in overall self-assessment averages. In addition, programs showed growth in the four self-assessment categories (Local Foods, Gardening, Education and Professional Development, and Policy). The most growth was seen in Local Foods, an indicator that more programs are utilizing local foods in their meals and communicating about the local foods that they are using in their meals and snacks. This is embodied by one program’s greatest success, “Teaching the children about different fruits and vegetables, and farm to table side of things. The kids truly enjoyed growing foods and found great accomplishment in being able to taste their products when they were done.”

Four types of programs were involved in Farm to ECE: Center-based, Family childcare home, Head Start/ Early Head Start, and School-based Pre-Kindergarten. All program types gained in their Best Practices with the exception of Head Start/Early Head Start. It is unclear from this data why Head Start/Early Head Start programs were lower on the assessment indicators than other types of programs. One possible reason may be that Head Start performance standards don’t align with Farm to ECE Best Practices. Further conversation with those programs may provide insight into the workings of their programs and their experiences implementing Farm to ECE within the EHS/HS context.



The Art of Play Early Learning Center Cumberland County, PA

The Art of Play Early Learning Center has been really enjoying their experience with our Farm to ECE project. We chose to invest in a Gardyn hydroponics system so we can grow fresh fruits and veggies all year long. We have been able to grow butterhead lettuce, arugula, basil, dill, mint, mini strawberries, sweet peppers, jalapeños, kale, cherry tomato, mini eggplant, green mustard, strawberries, kale, tatsoi, breen, red sails lettuce, sweet basil, peas, thyme, cardinal, monte carol, red mustard, rouge d'hiver, Swiss chard, and, Hungarian sweet peppers, chamomile, petunias, celery, and cucumbers.

The children have been learning about how bees are vital for plant and human life because of their ability to pollinate plants. Since we don't have bees inside we use an electric toothbrush to pollinate the plants ourselves. We've also learned about root systems because our hydroponics Gardyn gives us a unique ability to view the roots of the plants. On an interesting note, the children and I learned that cucumber roots smell exactly like a freshly cut cucumber. The children's favorite part of our project is helping with weekly harvests and taste testing our fruits and veggies.

I have to add that we loved this project so much and it's such a success that we decided to get a second one so we can grow more peppers and tomatoes for the kid's salads and snacks. It arrived last week and we put the seedlings we started in it. I'm planning, in the spring, to transplant some of the plants outside as well. We get 10 seed pods a month with the membership that will go towards our outdoor garden. There are option to get flowers and other veggies/ fruits too or get empty pots to grow our own seeds. I also got special inserts for mason jars to grow using an aquaponic method called "Kratky method". So we will try to move the seedlings this week to mason jars.

This project has truly been wonderful for the kids. Oh, and our mint really took off so I asked the kids to smell the plant and guess what it was. They all guessed a "toothpaste plant". Too funny.





Brown's Family Childcare, LLC Venango County, PA

Our garden grew:

Herbs: dill, parsley, mint, thyme and 2 varieties of basil

Salad greens: black seed simpson, deer tongue, parris island, red sails, marvel of four seasons and rouge d'Hiver

Tomatoes- mini cherry

Peppers- not successful due to the need to manually pollinate them. I did not do it right apparently

Wildflowers: 4 varieties of wild flowers

In the future we will plant other flowers by seed, more lettuce, tomatoes and lavender.

The advantages of our gardening are fresh produce, growing your own produce, aesthetically pleasing, bringing nature inside, great educational activity, holistic approach to mental health, saves money, minimal effort to use, and reusable pods.

The disadvantages are some plants are toxic to children such as tomatoes. When we grow tomatoes, I put the AeroGarden in another room and show the children photos. Start up costs can be pricey, and it uses electric, therefore resulting in a higher electric bill.



Children were involved by helping place pods in the AeroGarden, adding water when needed, documenting the growth, harvesting produce when ready and helping cook with produce.

Within a few days of setting up the AeroGarden, we started seeing seedlings. My heart felt so happy because it was at that point that I knew it was actually working. It has become one of the most beneficial materials in my indoor classroom. All of my preschoolers love watching the progress of our plants. One morning a 3-year-old girl shouted, "You grew while I was at my home! I was thinking about you growing and you did!!" That is evidence that children are learning and thinking about gardening! That in itself makes me glad we decided to try our indoor garden.

References

Keystone Kids Go! (n.d.). Retrieved 3/1/2022 from <https://www.keystonekidsgo.org/pa-napsacc.html>

NAPSACC. (2018). The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved 3/1/22 from <https://napsacc-demo.med.unc.edu/self-assessment-materials>



Go NAPSACC Self-Assessment Instrument

Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Child Care Program Name: _____

Farm to ECE



Go NAPSACC “Farm to ECE” focuses on increasing children’s access to and appreciation of local foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Early care and education practices in this area include serving local foods in meals or snacks, gardening with children, and other educational experiences that help children learn about food and where it comes from. Questions in this self-assessment relate mainly to your program’s practices for toddlers and preschool children.

Go NAPSACC is based on a set of best practices that stem from the latest research and guidelines in the field. Experts from the organizations throughout the country helped to shape this tool. After completing this assessment, you will be able to see your program’s strengths and areas for improvement, and use this information to plan healthy changes.

Before you begin:

- ✓ Gather staff manuals, parent handbooks, menus, and other documents that state your policies and practices related to local foods, gardening, and nutrition education.
- ✓ Recruit the help of key teachers and staff members who are familiar with menu planning and day-to-day practices.

As you assess:

- ✓ Some questions have different answer choices for half-day programs. These are in parentheses (). Full-day programs should use the answer choices without parentheses for these questions.
- ✓ Definitions of key words are marked by asterisks (*).
- ✓ Answer each question as best you can. If none of the answer choices seem quite right, just pick the closest fit. If a question does not apply to your program, move to the next question.

Understanding your results:

- ✓ The answer choices in the right-hand column represent the best practice recommendations in this area. To interpret your results, compare your responses to these best practice recommendations. This will show you your strengths and the areas in which your program can improve.



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Local Foods Provided

For Go NAPSACC, locally produced foods are foods from your program's garden, or foods bought directly from a farmer, through a distributor or "food hub", or at a grocery store, farm stand, or farmers' market. Local foods may be grown in your state or, if you are close to a border, a neighboring state.

1. Over the course of the year, the following types of local foods* are offered as part of meals or snacks:

See list and circle applicable types. Count and mark response below.

- ☐ Fruits
- ☐ Vegetables
- ☐ Herbs
- ☐ Grains
- ☐ Dry beans or peas
- ☐ Dairy products
- ☐ Meat, fish, eggs, or other meat alternatives

- ☐ No local foods are offered ☐ 1 types ☐ 2–3 types ☐ 4 or more types

* For Go NAPSACC, local foods can come from your program's garden; directly from a farmer; or from a distributor, "food hub", grocery store, farm stand, or farmers' market. Local foods may be grown in your state or, if you are close to a border, a neighboring state.

2. Over the course of the year, local foods are offered as part of meals or snacks:

- ☐ Rarely or never ☐ 1 time per month ☐ 2–3 times per month ☐ 1 time per week or more

3. During the growing season, local fruits and/or vegetables are part of meals or snacks:

- ☐ Less than 1 time per month (Half-day: Rarely or never) ☐ 1–3 times per month (Half-day: 1 time per month) ☐ 1–2 times per week (Half-day: 2–3 times per month) ☐ 3 times per week or more (Half-day: 1 time per week or more)

* Your growing season depends on your location. Fruits and vegetables may be available earlier in the spring and later in the fall in southern states. Produce may also be available longer if local farmers use greenhouses or grow crops like apples or sweet potatoes that can be stored.

4. Our program communicates* about local foods included in meals or snacks in the following ways:

See list and circle applicable communication strategies. Count and mark response below.

- ☐ Identify local foods on menus
- ☐ Provide information about the farms or gardens that produce our local foods
- ☐ Provide information about and/or recipes for cooking the local foods used in our meals or snacks
- ☐ Include information in marketing materials, on signs, or when giving tours to prospective families

- ☐ No communication about local foods ☐ 1 communication strategy ☐ 2–3 communication strategies ☐ 4 communication strategies

* Your program may communicate through passing conversations with families and more planned efforts. You may put information in handbooks, menus, newsletters, bulletin boards, or on your program's website or social media account.



Gardening

5. Describe your program's garden:*

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> There is no garden for herbs, fruits, or vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> It is a sensory garden† or grows only herbs | <input type="checkbox"/> It grows herbs, some fruits and/or vegetables for children to learn how food grows and/or to taste | <input type="checkbox"/> It helps children learn how food grows and produces enough fruits and/or vegetables to be part of preschoolers' meals or snacks |
|--|--|---|--|

* A garden for herbs, fruits, and/or vegetables can be planted in the ground or in containers like window boxes or pots. It can include vines growing on fences or arbors, or fruit trees planted in the outdoor play space. The garden may be seasonal, so consider the garden over the past year.

† Sensory gardens include plants with interesting smells, textures, colors, and even sounds, for young children to enjoy.

6. Over the course of a year, our program's garden grows the following number of different fruits and/or vegetables:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3–4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5–6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 or more |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|

7. The variety of fruits and/or vegetables that grow in our program's garden have the following characteristics:

See list and circle applicable characteristics. Count and mark response below.

- Plants with different flavors, colors, scents, and/or textures of interest to children
- Plants with different parts that are edible (roots, leaves, fruits)
- Plants that grow in different seasons
- Plants that reflect family input on the cultural, ethnic, or religious food traditions of enrolled children

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of these types of plants | <input type="checkbox"/> 1–2 characteristics | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 characteristics | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 or more characteristics |
|--|--|--|--|

8. During the growing season, structured gardening time is provided to preschool children:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per month or less (Half-day: Less than 1 time per month) | <input type="checkbox"/> 2–3 times per month (Half-day: 1 time per month) | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time per week (Half-day: 2–3 times per month) | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 times per week or more† (Half-day: 1 time per week or more) |
|--|---|--|--|

* Structured gardening time is a planned part of the day with a specific activity in mind.

† Even if small groups of children participate at different times, each child should participate 2 times or more over the course of the week.

Continue on next page →

9. Children do the following garden-related activities:

See list and circle applicable activities. Count and mark response below.

- Plan what to grow



Appendix A. GO NAPSACC Self-Assessment Instrument

- Examine seeds
- Observe seasons and weather
- Plant
- Weed
- Water
- Observe plant growth
- Observe pollinating insects and birds in the garden
- Harvest

☐ None of these activities ☐ 1–3 activities ☐ 4–6 activities ☐ 7 or more activities

Education & Professional Development

10. Teachers offer planned education* on food and where it comes from:

☐ Rarely or never ☐ 1 time per month ☐ 2–3 times per month ☐ 1 time per week or more

* Planned nutrition education can include circle time lessons, story time, stations during center time, experiments, field trips, and visitors.

11. During the growing season, preschool children do cooking or taste test activities* with fresh fruits or vegetables:

☐ Rarely or never ☐ 1 time per month ☐ 2–3 times per month ☐ 1 time per week or more

* Cooking or taste test activities can be a part of other planned education. Cooking activities do not have to include heating or baking food. Children can just cut, measure, and/or mix ingredients.

12. Preschool children have the opportunity to meet a farmer:*

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ 1 time per year or more ☐ 1 time per year or more and families are invited to attend

* Preschool children can meet a farmer when a farmer visits your program, or when children participate in a field trip to a farm, orchard, community garden, or farmer's market.

13. The types of learning materials available to preschool children to help them learn about food and where it comes from include:

See list and circle applicable materials. Count and mark response below.

- Posters or pictures of fruits or vegetables, plant growth, or farming
- Books about fruits or vegetables, plant growth, or farming
- Fruits, vegetables, and/or farming props in centers
- Posters, pictures, and/or books about food or farms that reflect the culture, race, or ethnicity of enrolled children, families, and staff
- Posters, pictures, and/or books about food or farms that expose children to people, foods, and cultures different from their own
- Books that tell the stories of farmers and farmworkers of color

☐ None ☐ 1–2 types of learning materials ☐ 3 types of learning materials ☐ 4 or more types of learning materials

14. Teachers talk with children informally* about where foods come from and how they grow:

☐ Rarely or never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Each time they see an opportunity



Appendix A. GO NAPSACC Self-Assessment Instrument

- * Staff and children may talk informally during meal or snack times, gardening time, or other opportunities throughout the day.

15. The portion of staff that participate in annual Farm to ECE* professional development related to their jobs is:

- ☐ No staff receive any related professional development ☐ Less than half ☐ More than half ☐ All staff† participate in related professional development 1 time per year or more

- * Farm to ECE topics can include information about local agriculture; how to store, prepare, and cook local foods; and how to garden with children and teach them about food and where it comes from.

- † Different professional development may be offered for cooking, classroom, and administrative staff depending on what they need to support your program's goals. Professional development can include information presented at staff meetings and in-person or online training for contact hours or continuing education credits. Very part-time or temporary staff do not need to be included.

16. Professional development on Farm to ECE covers the following topics:

See list and circle applicable topics. Count and mark response below.

- Benefits of supporting local agriculture
- What grows locally and when it is available
- Where to buy local foods
- Local, state, federal, or tribal regulations related to our program's use of local foods in meals or snacks
- Storage, preparation, or cooking of local fruits or vegetables
- Planning and maintenance of a garden
- Gardening with children
- Classroom cooking, taste test activities, or other food education with children
- Communication with families about local foods
- Racial equity in the food system or cultural competence related to menu planning or nutrition education
- Our program's policies on local foods and where our foods come from

- ☐ None ☐ 1–3 topics ☐ 4–6 topics ☐ 7 or more topics

Continue on next page →



17. Our program connects families to local foods in the following ways:

See list and circle applicable activities. Count and mark response below.

- Provide information about what farmers in our area grow and when products are available
- Provide information about where and how to buy local foods at lower costs and/or how to use food assistance benefits to buy local foods
- Provide information on storage, preparation, and/or recipes for cooking fruits and vegetables
- Provide information or recipes that reflect the cultural, ethnic, or religious food traditions of enrolled children and families
- Provide taste test opportunities
- Host cooking classes or connect families to nearby classes
- Provide opportunities to volunteer in the garden or with other classroom food activities
- Provide access to local food by sharing garden produce, or hosting a mobile market or CSA* pick-up location

☐ None ☐ 1–2 activities ☐ 3–4 activities ☐ 5 or more activities

* In a CSA or “community-supported agriculture” program, families buy a share of a farm’s produce at the beginning of the growing season. When harvesting begins, families receive a box of produce weekly.

18. Input from families is used in menu planning so that meals and snacks reflect the cultural, ethnic, and/or religious food traditions of enrolled children:

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely or never, or we do not provide any meals or snacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Only on special occasions or for specific learning activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Menus occasionally include meals and/or snacks that reflect input from families | <input type="checkbox"/> Menus regularly include meals and/or snacks that reflect input from families |
|--|--|--|---|

Policy

19. Our program’s written policy on Farm to ECE includes the following topics:

See list and circle applicable topics. Count and mark response below.

- Importance of using local foods
- Types of local foods that are served and how often
- Our program’s garden and expectations related to gardening
- Planned and informal gardening and nutrition education for children
- Professional development on “Farm to ECE” topics
- Activities that help connect families to local foods

☐ No written policy, or policy does not include these topics ☐ 1–2 topics ☐ 3–4 topics ☐ 5 or more topics

